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ABSTRACT

This paper compares local government and voluntary agency personnel in terms of characteristics of prospective employees, traits for on-the-job success, and specific course requirements for each. The research is intended to provide a basis for planning curricula, utilizing empirical evidence of the needs assessment and program evaluation by and for professional sport management in local government and voluntary agencies. Fourteen figures are included. (JD)

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULAR EVALUATION FOR SPORT MANAGEMENT CAREERS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

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A Refereed Paper Presented at the National Congress of the National Recreation and Park Association

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULAR EVALUATION FOR MANAGEMENT CAREERS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

Mary Dale Blanton, Patricia A. Beitel, Joy T. DeSensi,
and Dennie R. Kelley

My name is Dennie Kelley and I will introduce our study. First I'd like to introduce two colleagues from The University of Tennessee. Mary Dale Blanton from the Department of Health, Leisure and Safety who will present the results of this study, and Pat Beitel, from the Department of Physical Education and Dance, who will monitor questions and comments after the presentation.

The increase in the demand for sport management positions and programs is evident when we realize that in 1972 only two schools, the University of Massachusetts and Ohio State University offered Sport Management degrees. Today, there are more than 75 colleges and universities with at least 3,000 students enrolled in Sport Management Programs (Sports, Inc., April, 1988). As sport has assumed an increasing importance in American life and as sport management has struggled to emerge as an established and respected cross-discipline, the need for a new breed of sport manager has become evident. For a wide variety of reasons, colleges and universities have responded to the demand by developing and offering sport management professional preparation programs. For those of us in higher education, it has become clear that we must be accountable for the many courses of study that are currently offered and we must raise critical questions regarding the rigor of the curricula that is expected to produce this new era sport manager.

In addition to the present work, six studies have been identified which provide empirical evidence regarding the nature as well as

the needed directions for the sport management field. Parkhouse, in 1978 and 1979, examined the direction of graduate study in sport management. Results of this study revealed findings which included that: (a) programs were inbred; (b) physical education courses accounted for a sizeable majority of the preparation, (c) practitioners preferred a business-related emphasis, and (d) employers were dissatisfied with the preparation. A 1980 study by Parkhouse indicated that curricular offerings should meet the needs of a variety of sport related occupations.

In a 1982 Ulrich and Parkhouse study, the point was reiterated that no one type or track of curricular offerings will satisfy all sport management employment needs. In this 1982 study, an alumni-based model for curriculum design was proposed. The alumni of graduate level sport management programs chose the internship, public relations, communications, management principles, and athletic administration as the most applicable or relevant courses (Parks and Quain, 1986, p 23). It was noted by Parks and Quain that as the sport management setting becomes more complex, curricula must become more flexible to meet the needs of graduates (Parks & Quain, 1986).

In their survey, Quain and Parks (1986) determined professional competencies within the categories of fitness, promotion, marketing, management, sport, and aquatics. In addition, Parks and Quain (1986) explored curricular content, reporting that across the six career categories, management, interpersonal communications, public relations, and budgeting were among the top ten choices of general content areas for study. These results paralleled the work completed by Ulrich and Parkhouse (in 1982). In the Ulrich and Parkhouse and Parks and Quain

studies the internship or field experience was noted as an important part of the sport management preparation.

The present study was designed to contribute to the body of knowledge upon which to establish the theoretical basis and content for programs to meet the demand for sport managers. This work is actually a series of studies of which only one aspect is being presented. It specifically determined: (a) employer expectations of sport managers, and (b) employer evaluation of educational sport management programs in Local Government and Volunteer Agencies. Initially sixteen categories of sport management areas were designated. Today, we are comparing and contrasting local government and voluntary agencies. The sample for the total study included over 1,000 employers with stratification across the sixteen business/agency categories.

Findings of the needs assessment provided evidence between the two agency categories noting the relative degree of importance of: (a) criteria for hiring sport management personnel and on the job success, (b) types of management/leadership tasks and workload, (c) educational background, and (d) specific certifications and training.

PROCEDURES

The subjects for this study were 100 administrators (n=100) in local government agencies and in voluntary agencies randomly selected with stratification for AAHPERD (American Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance) Districts from the NRPA (National Recreation and Park Association) membership list. Subjects were mailed a letter of explanation, survey instrument, and stamped return envelope. There was a 73% return from the Local Government Agencies

and 67% from the Voluntary Agencies.

The format of the survey was primarily objective, but included some subjective questions. The survey was developed and pre-tested for reliability. Data were analyzed using cross-tabulation of all objective items by group, i.e. Local Government and Voluntary Agencies. Chi square was applied when appropriate, and the Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine group differences between rankings of criteria; $p = .05$ was used as the criterion alpha level.

RESULTS

The basis for the results of the degree of importance of eight criteria for both hiring and on-the-job success (Figure 1) was a five-point Likert type response of very important, important, neutral, unimportant, or very unimportant. The graphs depict the percentage of respondents who felt each of the eight criteria (in the key on the right) were important or very important for hiring vs. on-the-job success. Several key points can be made: (a) more than 70% of the respondents felt that all eight criteria were important considerations for hiring and that six of the eight criteria were important for on-the-job success; (b) the four criteria important for hiring (Figure 1a) to 90% of the respondents were, communication skills, leadership, personality, and public relations, while the three criteria important for on-the-job success (Figure 1b) to more than 90% of the respondents were communication skills, management skills, and leadership; (c) the rank order of the criteria was significantly ($p < .05$) different for hiring and for on-the-job success between the two business/agency categories (Figures 1c and 1d). Specifically the criterion with the most consistent importance, leadership, remained constant in both

Figure 1a. Relative Importance by Business/Agency Category

Figure 1b. Relative Importance by Business/Agency Category

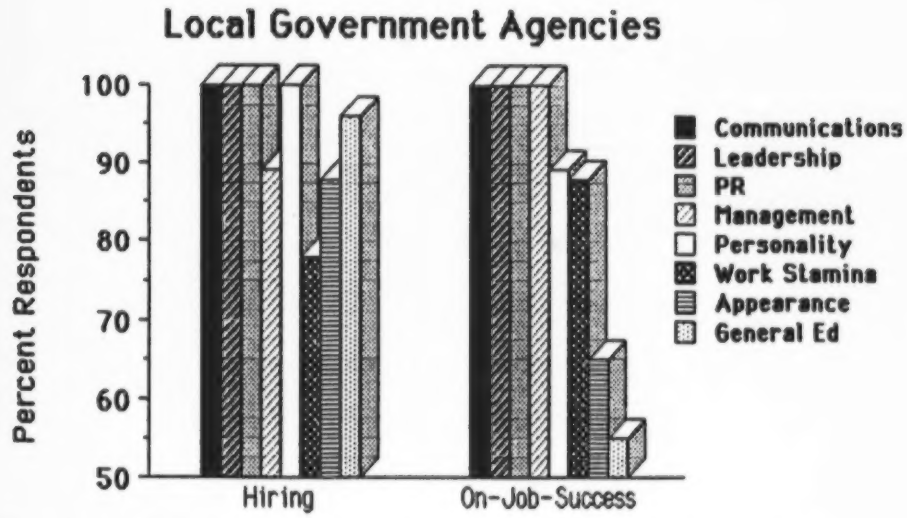

Figure 1c. Relative Import. of Criteria for Hiring vs. On-Job-Success

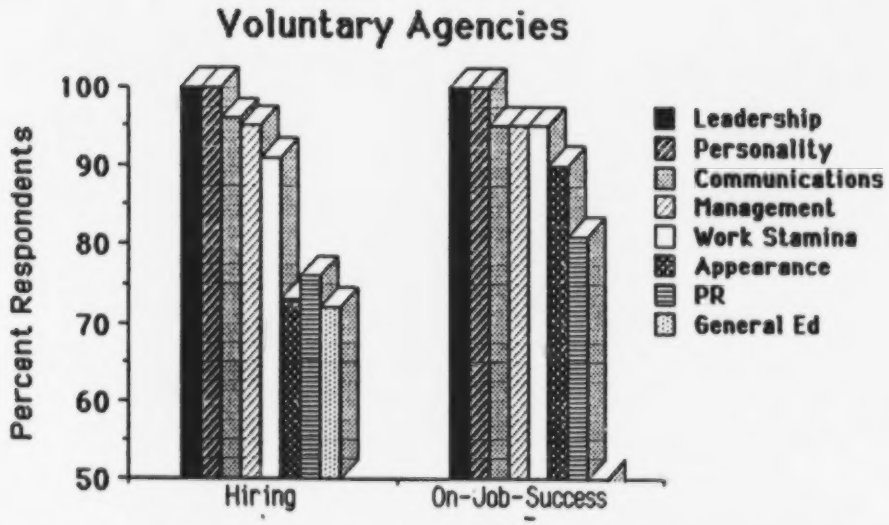

Figure 1d. Relative Import. of Criteria for Hiring vs. On-Job-Success

lists.

The basis for the results in Figures 2a and 2b were open ended responses which indicated the percentage of workload for a total of eight tasks and a chance to indicate other tasks. This summary identifies the percentage of respondents who indicated that the workload of the specific management tasks fell within the identified ranges. For example, in Figure 2a, 42% of the respondents from Local Government Agencies, and 32% of the respondents from Voluntary Agencies indicated the management task of directing was 25% of the collective workload of their sport management personnel.

The key points from these results (Figure 2) were: (a) the responses grouped strongly into one specified range for the management tasks of budgeting, communicating, evaluating, and staffing; (b) there is a significant rank order difference between agencies for management tasks accounting for 25% of the workload and 15-20% of the workload (Figure 2a); (c) Local Government Agencies reported a significantly greater percentage of personnel with 25% or more of the workload for the management tasks of controlling, directing, and organizing than Voluntary Agencies (Figure 2a); however, (d) Voluntary Agencies reported a significantly greater percentage of personnel with 15-25% of the workload for the management tasks of directing, organizing, and planning (Figure 2b); (e) other identified tasks included as component parts of the workload were instruction and fund raising.

There was indication that there are sport management positions within the Local Government settings with all three degree levels (Figure 3), while only the bachelors and masters degrees were required for sport management positions in Voluntary Agency settings. In summary:

Percent of Workload for Management Tasks for Personnel in Local Government and Voluntary Agencies

Local Gvt Agency Respondents	25% of the Workload	Voluntary Agency Respondents
39%	Controlling	0%
42%	Directing	32%
39%	Organizing	5%
	15-20% of the Workload	
14%	Directing	48%
51%	Organizing	58%
0%	Planning	48%

Figure 2a. Business/Agency Category Differences ($p < .05$)

Percent of Workload for Management Tasks for Personnel in Local Government and Voluntary Agencies

Local Gvt Agency Respondents	5-10% of the Workload	Voluntary Agency Respondents
88%	Budgeting	90%
50%	Communicating	58%
51%	Controlling	31%
43%	Directing	16%
88%	Evaluating	69%
13%	Organizing	31%
75%	Planning	42%
63%	Staffing	42%

Figure 2b. Business/Agency Category Differences ($p = .005$)

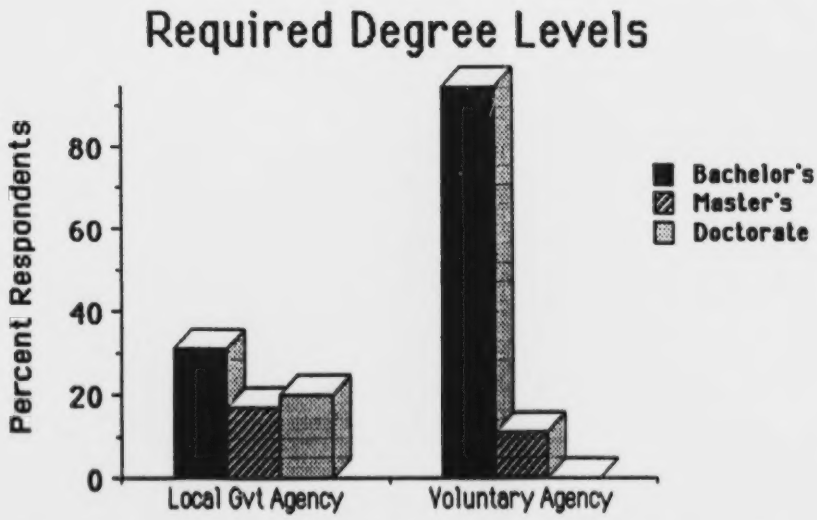

Figure 3. Relative Importance by Business/Agency Category

(a) 31% of the respondents in Local Government Agencies indicated that a bachelor's degree was required for one to seven sport management positions in their agencies, whereas 95% of respondents from Voluntary Agencies required a bachelor's degree for their sport management positions; (b) 10% of all respondents indicated that a master's degree was required for one to ten positions, and (c) 20% of the respondents in Local Government Agencies indicated that a doctorate was required for one to two sport management positions (Figure 3).

Within the sport management full-time positions available in Local Government and Voluntary Agencies the following breakdown existed for sport management degrees depicting that there was a significant ($p < .05$) difference in the rank order. More than 40% of all respondents preferred that personnel in full-time positions have a major in sport management (Figure 4). Some required either a major or minor in sport management for full-time positions, while requirement of a minor was indicated by the fewest respondents (Figure 4). The pattern existing for part-time positions indicated that there was a difference between the two groups concerning the preference for a major (64%) or a minor (63%).

Based upon a Likert type response to 23 courses or curricular areas (Figure 5), 90% or more of the respondents indicated that six courses/curricular areas were important or very important, i.e., budgeting, communications, leadership, personnel management, program planning, and supervision. Also, there were differences across both respondent categories regarding the importance of particular courses or curricular areas in terms of the uniqueness of the setting. Of the seven sport/leisure study areas identified on the survey and

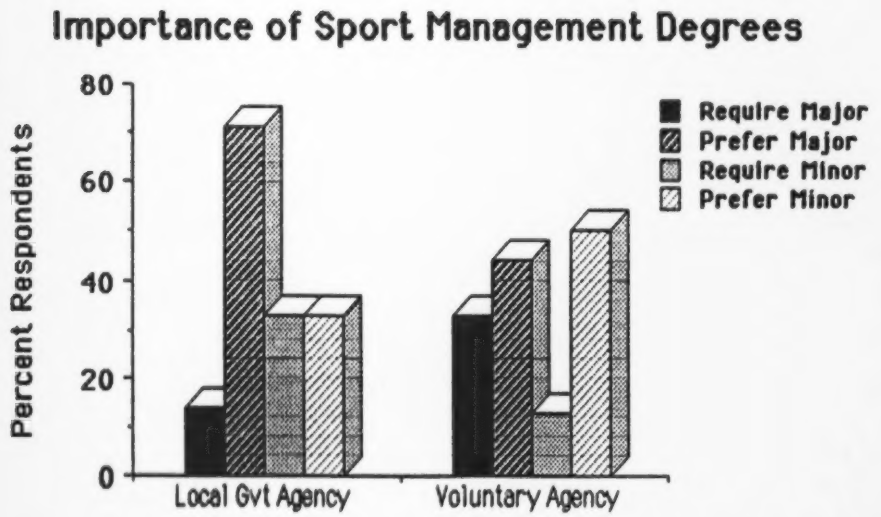

Figure 4. Difference in Expectations for Full Time Employment ($p < .05$)

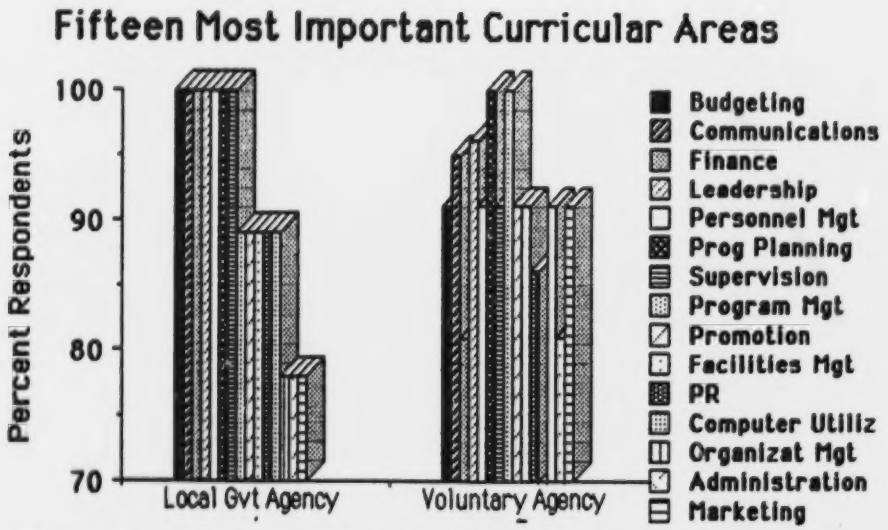

Figure 5. Relative Importance by Business/Agency Category

evaluated with a Likert type response, five of the areas were identified by more than 50% of the respondents as important background for prospective sport management personnel (Figure 6). These sport/leisure study areas were: current issues in sport, psychology of sport, philosophy of sport, philosophy of leisure and recreation, and sociology of leisure and recreation. Again, it is important to note that, between the two Agency categories, there were differences regarding the importanc particular sport/ leisure study areas. Specifically, over 50% of the respondents from Voluntary Agencies felt that all areas were important to have except history and sociology of sport; in contrast, over 50% of the Local Government respondents indicated all areas were important except history of sport, with philosophy of leisure and recreation being the most important sport/leisure study area for prospective employees (Figure 6).

Business/agency respondents reported certain certifications were expected for sport management personnel (Figure 7). Across both Agency categories, two certification areas were mentioned as being important: (a) CPR, and (b) Advanced First Aid. It should be noted that there was an extreme range in terms of how each business/agency viewed which certifications were the most important (Figure 7).

This next section of the study is focused on the nature of the work experiences for best preparation of sport management majors for positions in Local Government and Voluntary Agencies. All respondents identified work experience as the most important type of experience beyond the basic college core curriculum (Figure 8). Extra curricular activities were also expressed as being an important experience for potential sport managers in Voluntary Agency settings (Figure 8). The

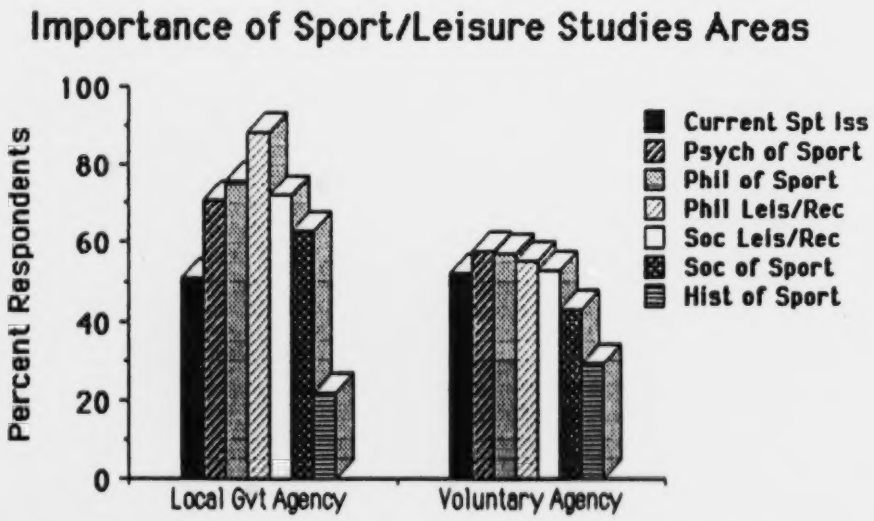

Figure 6. Business/Agency Category Difference (p = .013)

Figure 7. Relative Importance by Business/Agency Category

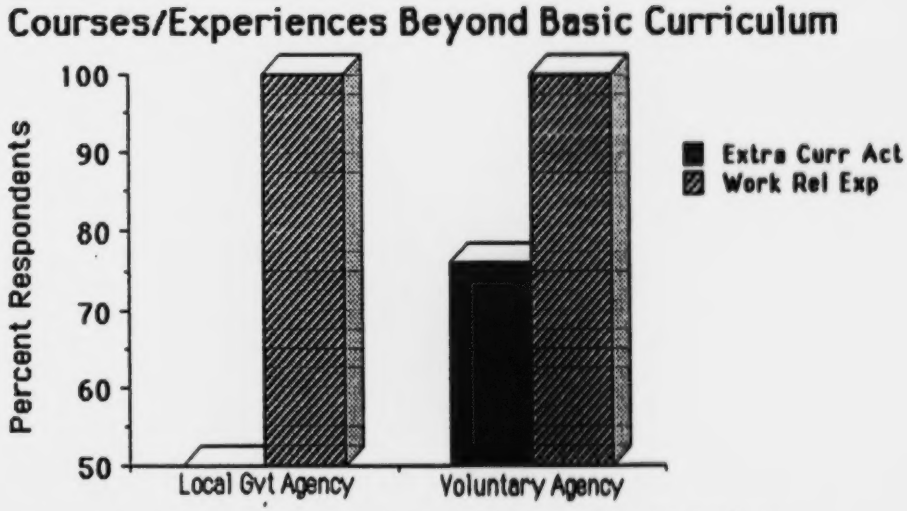

Figure 8. Relative Importance by Business/Agency Category

type of work related experiences expected can be summarized into three categories (Figure 9): (a) administration/management, (b) programming, and (c) participative sport experiences.

Respondents identified five administrative/management tasks as being important work experiences. These included: (a) personnel management, (b) budgeting/fiscal management, (c) facility management; and (d) program organization and planning, and (e) marketing (Figure 9).

Specific programming experiences (Figure 10) cited were: (a) program development and leadership, (b) fitness testing, (c) special event management, (d) officiating, (e) tournament/league organization, and (f) volunteer and membership recruitment and retention (Figure 10). Some respondents also expressed their preference that prospective employees have participative sport experiences (Figure 11). These included informal recreation, athletic/sport participation, and communication experiences with a variety of publics/clientele (Figure 11).

Within the college core curriculum, Local Government and Voluntary Agency personnel indicated that both practica and internship experiences were very important (Figure 12). There seems to be no clear pattern in terms of which is the more important, practica or inships, between Local Government and Voluntary Agency categories. The range of the number of recommended practica was from one experience to as many practica experiences as possible. The length of the practica should be from one term to one to three years. Short term practica were suggested by some respondents for students to identify areas of interests and then increase the length of the practica to one quarter or semester.

The categories and types of practica experiences as suggested by

Administration/Management Experiences for Prospective Sport Management Employees

Personnel Management

Budgeting & Fiscal Management

Facility Management & Maintenance

Program Organization & Planning

Marketing

Figure 9. Summary for Local Gvt and Voluntary Agencies

Programming Experiences for Prospective Sport Management Employees

Program Development & Leadership

Fitness Testing

Special Events Management

Officiating

Tournament/League Organization

Volunteer & Membership Recruitment and Retention

Figure 10. Summary for Local Gvt and Voluntary Agencies

Participative Sport Experience for Prospective Sport Management Employees

Informal Recreation Experience

Athletic/Sport Participation

Sport Communication/Information

Figure 11. Summary for Local Gvt and Voluntary Agencies

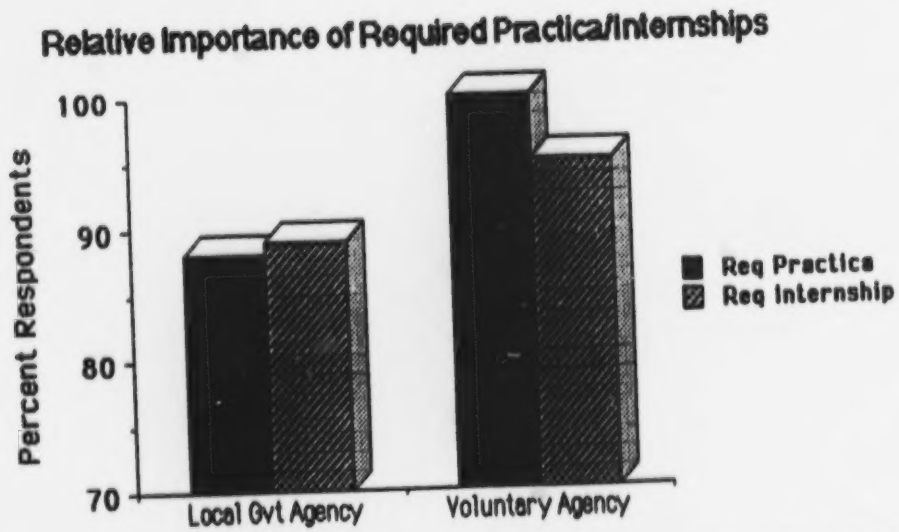

Figure 12. Inverse Relationship by Business/Agency Categ. ($p < .05$)

respondents in both local government and voluntary agencies were primarily program experiences with some administrative/management tasks. Of the program tasks recommended for practica experiences, officiating and tournament/league direction were identified as being the most important followed by teaching and individual sport/athletic participation experiences. General program administration/management was identified as being the most important administrative task to be included in practica experiences.

Respondents indicated one to four internships that lasted from one quarter/semester to one year were adequate. Categories for types of internship experiences were identical to those for practica; however, the specific experiences within each category were different for internships and practica. Program assistant and instructor of sport activities were identified as being the most important program experiences while personnel management was identified as being an equally important administrative task. Some respondents suggested selecting a specific area of emphasis and concentrating the internship experience on site in that particular area of interest.

In summary, the student career goals should influence whether the practicum and internship are at the same site. If a general background is desired, different sites are probably more appropriate, whereas specialization is more important if the practicum and internship are at the same site. It was noted that to have generic management skills is insufficient preparation for the sport manager, and the practica/ internship experience is important in order to understand the specific sport management setting. For this reason, the suggestion was made that an internship in an comprehensive sport organization with a

variety of experiences was important.

The results of the study concerning the diversity in the types of sport management positions are summarized in Figure 13. There are management positions associated with a central administrative level which include: (a) director of sport/athletic programs, (b) director of aquatics, and (c) director of health, wellness, and fitness. At the program administrative level, four different positions were identified. There were more sport/athletic program coordinators than any other employee positions mentioned followed by sport/fitness coordinators and aquatic supervisors. At the program specialist level there were three types of employee positions identified: (a) recreation sport specialists, (b) general program specialists, and (c) health/fitness specialists. Other sport management positions listed were physical director, membership/sales director, public relations/promotion, marketing specialists, and arena managers (Figure 13).

In terms of salary ranges for full-time personnel, the results of the study (Figure 14) showed there was a major difference in the rank order of available salaries. In summary, the only people making $25,000 and above are annual full-time employees. Salary ranges that exist for Voluntary Agencies are much greater across personnel than for local government agencies, but within $15,000-$40,000 the pattern between the two agency categories was similar (Figure 14). Voluntary Agencies have significantly more personnel at higher salary ranges than Local Government Agencies (Figure 14).

SUMMARY

In summary, based on these data there seems to be a need for a

Central Administrative Management Positions

Director of Sport/Athletic Programs
Director of Acquatics
Director of Health, Wellness, and Fitness

Program Administrative Positions

Sport/Athletic Program Director
Sport/Fitness Coordinators
Aquatic Supervisors

Program Specialist Positions

Recreation Sport Specialist
General Program Specialist
Health/Fitness Specialist

Figure 13. Summary of Sport Management Positions Across Local Gvt and Voluntary Agencies

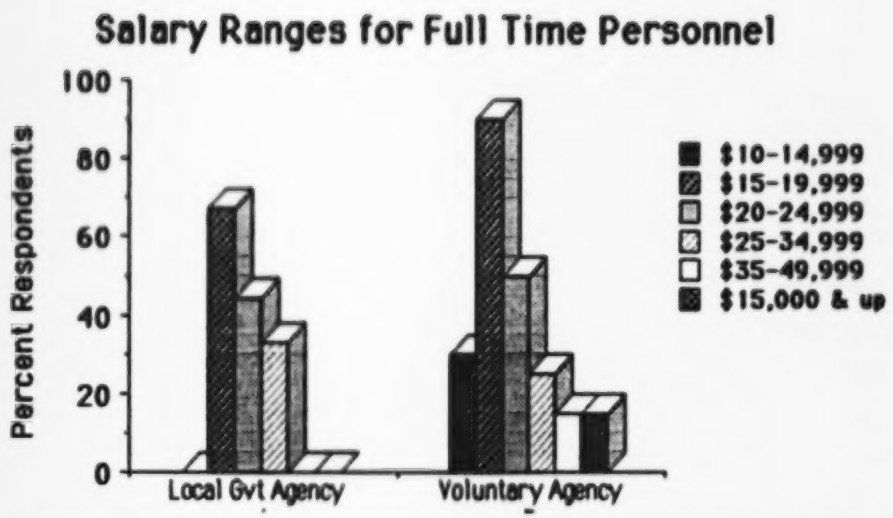

Figure 14. Business/Agency Category Differences (p = .038)

common curricular core for all sport managers for both agency groups. For example, communication, leadership, and management skills were identified by both groups as being important for hiring and for on-the-job success. This suggests sport management majors should have coursework and application opportunities to develop these skills. Overall, program planning was identified as a crucial part of the preparation of sport managers; however, the development of personnel and supervision skills was thought to be more important by local government agencies while program management was identified as more important to voluntary agencies. Both groups have a strong need to have focused practical applications such as personnel management skills, programatic skills, fiscal skills, and facility management skills. It is desirable for each student to have some background in each of these areas. As students identify and clarify specific career goals more emphasis should be placed in one of these areas. Thus, there is a need for flexibility in the sport management curriculum that would provide for electives in the professional area in order for students to better prepare themselves for specific expectations which differ across various business/agency groups. Ideally this coursework would lead up to and prepare students for practica and/or internship experiences which, if properly designed and supervised, should prepare students for the workplace.

In conclusion, the needs assessment and curricular evaluation by sport management personnel in Local Government and Voluntary Agencies provide part of the empirical evidence to support the following premises: (a) there is a need to have managers with an understanding and appreciation of sport (Mullin, 1980); (b) that different business/

agencies have different sport management needs (Parkhouse, 1984; Parkhouse and Ulrich, 1970); and (c) that program content/processes can be identified and evaluated. All of this integrated information can be used as the basis for developing/modifying curricular models and improving instructional strategies to facilitate the development of even stronger and more able sport managers for Local Government and Voluntary Agencies.